

# COMMUNITY RAIL SAFETY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

## MEETING AGENDA

### Information of Meeting

**Date:** Thursday, October 31, 2024

**Time:** 11:00 am -1:00 pm

**Location:** Virtual via Zoom

**Note:** This meeting will be recorded

**Facilitator:** Sheryl Trent

### Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84670808123?pwd=VcTiRVJCYdbsK0F5B3e8RqVa4jPFRn.1>

**Meeting ID:** 846 7080 8123

**Passcode:** 498524

### Agenda

11:00 am Boo!

11:02 am Housekeeping/Administrative Items (*Information*)

- Review and Approval of Community Committee Minutes from 10.24.24
- Industry Committee Minutes from 10.21.24

11:10 am **Section IX**, A Legislative Proposal Concerning the Creation of a Fee Structure or other Revenue Source, An Assessment, and A Governance Body and An Office of Rail Safety (*Information, Discussion, and Direction about Language for Governance body*)

- Presentation from union representatives on fee structure concepts
- Discuss draft language (below) on governance

**DRAFT Language:** The Office of Rail Safety should be housed within the \_\_\_\_\_ in coordination with other departments in the State. The Committee has strong concerns around the level and quality of access and advocacy to this office from stakeholders and members of the public. Those concerns need to be addressed by the new Office. Integration with inspection staff and enforcement capabilities are key issues to consider in the placement of this new Office.

11:30 am **Section V**, A Quantification of the Adequate Levels of Investment Necessary to Reduce Highway-Rail Crossing Incidents and other Risks

- PUC presentation on crossing data (*new tables*)

- Discuss draft language (*below*)

The Committee recommends a proactive approach to quantifying the levels of investment that would include a focus on complete data collection for a full picture of the existing situation and projected needs. The areas of most concern include funding existing state programs such as Operation Lifesaver, adequate funding for local governments and road authorities to make necessary updates and upgrades to prevent incidents and provide maintenance of crossings; and requirements for railroads to communicate with road authorities to achieve the necessary maintenance and infrastructure upgrades. Railroad crossings should be priorities for safety improvements, but investments in signage, education, communication, and coordination are also important, with a balance between rural areas and more urban areas.

11:50 am Review of Language for Multiple Sections (*Direction on Language*)

**Section IV**, An Assessment of Emergency Response and Cleanup Capacity Needed for Hazardous Materials Incidents Involving Railroads

The Committee recommends a third-party independent assessment to identify the current state and desired future state with strategies and funding recommendations to achieve that future state. Significant improvements can be made in the location and accessibility of equipment caches, coordinated training of first responders and railroad operators, clarification of roles and responsibilities, and resources available when needed. The assessment should include identification of areas of concerns to include geographic accessibility, rural areas, environmentally significant areas, and high traffic areas.

**Section VIII**, A Report Concerning Communication Issues Impacting Rail Lines in the State, Including Communication with State Entities Such As the Department of Public Safety; Communication Issues Between Crews Working Long Trains; And Communication From Wayside Detectors To Crews

Concerns with onboard train communications: ground-based employees are issued handheld radios that work on a radio bandwidth that has become narrower. Engineers rely on the mounted, stationary radio in the cab of the locomotive which is larger and provides a stronger signal and increased range. However, this is the only radio they can use, so in the event of an emergency that requires the engineer to leave the cab they are left without radio communication. Ground based employees use handheld radios to perform safety tasks such as switching moves, to control reverse movement of the train, to properly procure red zone and

**release red zone**, federally mandated air tests and other critical three-point protection safety tasks. These handheld radios frequently experience jumbled speech when more than one person is speaking at the same time, this is even more prevalent in the case of an emergency. When working trains over 8,500 feet, workers rely on signal repeaters to intensify the limited range of handheld radios to communicate. Signal repeaters create a lag between sending and receiving a signal of between six and eight seconds which complicates communication for train workers especially in an emergency situation. Moreover, when trains over 8,500 feet move through a tunnel or mountainous or hilly, undulating terrain the signals can be interrupted. In an emergency, especially in a mountainous region, these communications issues can impede or prevent a timely response by train workers to an emergency.

Concerns with identifying local emergency services: Train workers who are assisting a fellow worker during a health crisis expressed a need to have situational awareness of which emergency contact number to call to get help.

Concerns with being uninformed when entering an ongoing emergency situation: Train workers expressed concern with not having a system that alerts them to emergency incidents that are underway in an area the train is approaching. The discussions of the Industry Committee about the train blocking emergency routes during the Marshall Fire highlighted a need for greater situational awareness of ongoing emergencies unrelated to the operation of a train in these distinct emergency situations.

Concerns with one-way reporting a train incident to central dispatch: Train workers are required to notify their company's central dispatching system in the event of an incident. However, there seems to be no clear protocol. Once the report is made, however, there is no follow-up from dispatch with the train workers, who are often the only ones at the scene before the first responders arrive, other times they keep the engineer in the loop of what is happening. Even though train workers are not expected to be first responders, they need to know who is coming to the scene, what needs to be done (cut the crossing, etc.) and when they will arrive while they remain the only ones on the scene of the event. The Committee requests an update to rules to allow the crew (after alerting the railroad emergency response center) to call State Watch and the Office of Rail Safety to follow up and report that there has been an incident, derailment, crossing incident, or trespassing.

Concerns with wayside detectors: Train workers often receive information from wayside detector readings when the train has completely passed the detector,

rather than giving real time information when the train first encounters the detector. Essential wayside detector is the one leaving the yard that counts axles. [??] Manifest needs to be clear on where materials are in relationship to locomotive. Differing announcements from wayside detectors depending on technology models. Discrepancy in information reporting to crews vs. operation centers and the information captured by detectors.

Concerns regarding training: Training needs to cover a variety of communication-related topics/issues:

Training on management and worker side to ensure State/DPS are notified correctly, timely, and with the right information. Trainings need to focus on life safety in response to incidents (not reopening track or commerces/customers)

12:15 pm **Section VII**, An Assessment of Best Practices for Ensuring Financial Responsibility for Response, Cleanup, and Damages from Major Rail Events, Which Assessment Reviews Best Practices from Other States (*Discussion and Direction about Language*)

Draft Language: While there are state statutes that adequately address the issues of ensuring financial responsibility for response, cleanup and damages, the main concerns of the Committee fall into four main areas:

- 1) The amount of funding available for a worst-case scenario event, the ongoing cleanup and long-term monitoring after the event;
- 2) The gaps in coordination and communication before, during and after an event in particular the coordination and command of efforts during an incident;
- 3) The need for data collection, surveying and analysis for people, the environment, the economy, and infrastructure that is at risk; and
- 4) The establishment of concrete preparedness plans and mitigation plans.

12:45 pm Review proposed Agenda for Joint Meeting on November 7<sup>th</sup>

November 14th Meeting Topics

**Section II** - Data accessibility (discuss and draft language)

**Section VII**—Best practices (finalize language)

**Section IX** --Fee structure (finalize language)

November 21st Meeting Topics

**Section III** - Data accessibility (discuss and draft language)

Final review of all language